

Shortly before publishing this paper, Vol. XV of Peters' Checklist of Birds of the World appeared in which Oberholser's *Gracula javensis baweana* together with Salvadori's *Gracula enganensis* are united with *Gracula r. religiosa* Linnaeus. So far as it concerns the first subspecies I can agree, but I am of the opinion that there is sufficient reason to uphold *enganensis* as has been pointed out earlier by Junge³.

I could not examine a single skin of Rensch's *mertensi*, but in the measurements, it closely resembles *religiosa*.

References:

- ¹ Kuroda, N. *Birds of the Island of Java*, Vol. 1, 1933, p. 34-36.
- ² Stresemann, Erw. Einiges über das Genus *Gracula* und seine Arten; *Nov. Zoöl.*, 19, 1912, p. 312-315.
- ³ Junge, G. C. A. On a collection of birds from Engano; *Treubia*, 16, 1938, p. 355-356.
- ⁴ Junge, G. C. A. Fauna Simalurensis—Aves; *Temminckia* I, 1936, p. 65/6.
- ⁵ Finsch, O. Das Genus *Gracula* Linn. und seine Arten, nebst Beschreibung einer neuen Art; *Notes Leyden Museum*, 21, 1899/1900, p. 1.

Eggs of the Great Sand Plover, *Charadrius leschenaultii* Lesson, from Somaliland

by C. J. O. HARRISON

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When the collection of eggs presented to the British Museum (Natural History) by R. E. Drake-Brockman was incorporated with the systematic collection, it was found that some clutches had only the vernacular name of the bird with them. One such clutch collected at Berbera, Somalia, on 9th March 1913, (B.M. No. 1946.7.30) had the name 'Dotterel'. On the basis of the size and appearance of the eggs it was possible to eliminate most of the charadriine plovers breeding in the area as species that could have produced them. Captain C. R. S. Pitman suggested that these might be the eggs of the Great Sand Plover, *Charadrius leschenaultii*.

The eggs measure 37.4 x 25.1, 35.8 x 26.5, 36.6 x 25 mm. They bear a close resemblance to some clutches of *C. hiaticula*. Two eggs are pyriform, while the third is a little more ovate. They are a pale buffish-stone in ground colour, with a faint greenish tinge in some parts. They are marked with fairly profuse blackish spots and specks, very variable in size, the larger markings tending to be drawn out into lines, streaks and comma-shaped marks. The underlying markings, in various shades of pale mauve and grey, are fewer than the superficial ones. There is a tendency for the markings to be concentrated in a zone around the larger end. This is most marked in the atypically-shaped egg, in which the pointed third of the shell is mostly unmarked, and is less apparent in the other two eggs.

Eggs from the breeding range of the species in Asia have been described by Grote (1924-5). The description tallies closely with that of the clutch taken by Drake-Brockman. The Asiatic eggs were, however, of a larger size, measurements being: 38 x 29, 37.2 x 28.4, 38 x 28.8, 35.2 x 29.3, 40.3 x 29.8, 38 x 26.5, 38.2 x 26.6 mm. The size difference is relatively slight (about 2 mm. on each dimension) and this might be explained by the fact that the birds suspected of breeding in the Red Sea area are smaller than the typical Asiatic birds.

The normal breeding range of *C. leschenaultii* is across the Kirghiz region and Turkestan, and around the Caspian Sea, coming no nearer to

the Red Sea than northern Iran. Von Heuglin (Archer & Godman 1937) suspected that it might breed by the Red Sea, and Nicholl (Meinertzhagen 1930) had suggested that it bred on the Egyptian Red Sea coast. Although birds which appeared too young to have migrated from Asiatic breeding grounds were noted by a number of writers, the only breeding record was a sighting by Archer (*l.c.*) of a downy chick with adult birds at Saad Din Island, Somalia, on 15th July (year not stated). In the absence of other possible species one can reasonably suspect that the eggs collected by Drake-Brockman were those of a local breeding population of *C. leschenaultii*. The date at which they were taken is early in the year, but the Kentish Plover, *Charadrius alexandrinus*, was also breeding at this period.

N.B. I am grateful to Dr. C. Vaurie for the information that, in examining recent Russian literature of the Charadriiformes, he finds that doubt has been thrown on the authenticity of the Asiatic eggs with which the clutch described here has been compared. In these circumstances it is possible that no genuine material is available for comparison and it would be unwise to place too much reliance on this earlier description.

References:

- Archer, G. F. and Godman, E. M., 1937 *Birds of British Somaliland and the Gulf of Aden*, Vol. 2. Gurney & Jackson: London.
 Grote, H. 1924-5. N. Sarudny über Nest und Eier von *Charadrius leschenaulti* Less *Beitr. Fortpflanz. Biol. Vögel* 1: 84-6.

A note on the habits of *Mayrornis schistaceus* Mayr (Muscicapidae) of the South-West Pacific

by SHANE A. PARKER

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The S.W. Pacific genus *Mayrornis* Wetmore comprises three small, predominantly slate-grey monarchine flycatchers: *lessoni* (Gray), (Fijian group), *versicolor* Mayr (Onga Levu, Fiji) and *schistaceus* Mayr (Vanikoro, Santa Cruz group). Detailed descriptions of the three species will be found in Mayr (1933, pp. 17-20).

Little is known of this genus apart from skins. E. Layard (1876, pp. 144-5) described a nest and eggs of *lessoni* collected at Ngila on Taviuni, on 23rd July 1875. The nest was composed entirely of rootlets and thickly covered with the yellow cocoons of a common large spider. The nest site was not mentioned. The two eggs, which are now in the British Museum of Natural History (B.M. No. 1901. 12. 5. 212-3) were redescribed by Oates (1903, p. 267); they are fairly glossy and have a creamy white ground with spots and speckles of purplish-brown and lilac-grey forming a zone or cap at the large end and one or two speckles elsewhere on the surface. Measurements in mm. 18.35 x 14, 18.5 x 14.4. Measurements of the nest as given by Layard (changed here to mm.) are: external diam. 68, internal diam. 45, ext. depth 89, int. depth 45. Nehr-korn (1910, p. 186) stated eggs of *lessoni* to be white with dark brown spots in a close and sharply demarcated zone, and to measure 18-19 x 13.5 mm.

Mayr (1945) records *lessoni* as being a bird of the substage in lowland and mountain forest, whose habits are apparently similar to those of *Monarcha*, but which sometimes spreads the tail like a fan. The species